CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Pension refers to the money paid under given conditions to a person after retirement from active service or to surviving dependents of an employee who has retired after years of service (Nwanna & Ogbonna, 2019). It can further be described as a fixed sum of money paid to an employee after spending considerable number of years in active service. It is a fund which is paid on monthly basis during an individual working career, and from which periodic payments are made to support the worker's retirement from employment. Pension administration differs from one country to the other, depending on the policies and constitution of the country. In Nigeria, the government have introduced contributory pension scheme (CPS). This is an arrangement where both the employers and the employees contribute a portion of an employee's monthly emolument towards the payment of the employee's pension at retirement (Nwanna & Ogbonna, 2019).

There are various types of pension schemes globally, these pension schemes include voluntary contribution scheme, micro pension scheme, cross border pension, retirement plan and institutional pension fund management. However, our focus in this study is the retirement pension scheme in Nigeria (Habu, 2008). The Pension Reform Act (PRA) 2004 is a Nigeria law that regulates and govern the pension industry in Nigeria. The act was enacted to provide a uniform and contributory pension scheme for employees in both public and private sectors. The objectives of the pension acts include the need to provide a uniform scheme that would ensure retirement income security for employees through a contributory pension scheme and to promote transparency and accountability in the management and administration of pension funds (Nwankwo, 2016). The PRA also protect the rights of

pensioners by ensuring timely and adequate payment of pension benefits. The PRA has undergone several amendments such as:

1. Pension Reform Act (Amendment of 2014) which introduced new provisions on pension fund investment, pension fund administration and retirement benefits.
2. Pension Reform Act (Amendment of 2020) which introduced new provision on pension fund management, pension fund custody and retirement benefits

The Pension Reform Act 2004 has played a significant role in reforming the pension industry in Nigeria and providing a framework for a sustainable and contributory pension scheme. It made provision for the engagement of Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) who play a crucial role in managing pension funds and ensuring retirees receive their benefits. Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) are companies licensed by PenCom to manage and invest pension funds in employees' Retirement Savings Accounts (RSAs). Their main functions include: opening RSAs for employees, investing and managing pension fund assets, facilitating the payment of retirement benefits, maintaining accurate accounting records among others (Adegbite, 2017). The PRA 2014 extended its services to include self-employed individuals and those working in organizations with fewer than three employees. This initiative aims to provide pension benefits to a broader segment of the population.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The ideal pension administration system should ensure that retirees receive their benefits promptly and efficiently, providing financial security and a dignified post-retirement life (Adegbite, 2017). A well-functioning system would operate with full transparency, accountability, and regular reviews to adjust benefits in line with economic realities (PenCom, 2019). Pensioners should have easy access to their entitlements without unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, along with adequate healthcare support and social welfare

programs (Nwanna & Ogbonna, 2019). Unfortunately, the reality for many retirees in Edo State falls far short of this ideal, creating significant hardships for those who have dedicated their working lives to public service (Ojo & Adebayo, 2023).

Retirees in Edo State face numerous challenges in accessing their pension benefits, despite reforms like the Contributory Pension Scheme (Ibe &Nonyelu, 2024). Persistent delays in payment of pensions and gratuities have become a major source of distress, with many pensioners waiting months or even years to receive what is rightfully theirs (Eze & Okonkwo, 2023). This situation has pushed some retirees into extreme financial difficulties, while tragically, others have passed away without ever receiving their full entitlements (Uche & Mohammed, 2022). The problem extends beyond just delayed payments to include issues of poor healthcare access, lack of social support, and the psychological toll of constantly fighting to receive earned benefits (Okafor & Adeleke, 2023).

Administrative inefficiencies and alleged mismanagement compound these problems. Retirees frequently encounter excessive documentation requirements and complex verification processes that seem designed more to frustrate than to facilitate access to benefits (Fapohunda, 2023). There are troubling indications that pension funds may sometimes be diverted for other purposes, leaving retirees without the resources they depend on. Even when payments are eventually made, the amounts often fail to keep pace with inflation, eroding the real value of pensions over time (Udom & Nwakanma, 2024). The non-harmonization of pension increments means some retirees miss out on periodic adjustments that could help maintain their standard of living.

While the Edo State government has made some efforts to address these issues, significant gaps remain between policy intentions and actual outcomes for retirees. This study seeks to thoroughly examine these challenges, with particular focus on understanding why systemic problems persist despite pension reforms. It aims to provide concrete, evidence-based

recommendations to improve pension administration in Edo State, ensuring that retirees receive their benefits in a timely and transparent manner. The research provides valuable insights to help bridge the gap between pension policies and their implementation, ultimately working toward a system that truly serves and protects those who have served the public.

1.3 Research Questions

From the above statement of the problem, the following research questions are raised to guide this study:

i. How effective are the pension fund administrators in facilitating the quick access of retirees to their benefits in Edo State?
ii. How do administrative bottlenecks affect the payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State?
iii. How do excessive delays in accessing retirement benefits affect the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State?
iv. What policy strategy should the government adopt in facilitating quick access to benefits?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research work is to examine pension administration and access to retirement benefits in Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives includes to:

i. investigate the level of effectiveness of pension fund administrators in facilitating the quick access of retirees to their benefits in Edo State.
ii. ascertain the effect of administrative bottlenecks on payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State.

iii. find out the effect of excessive delays in accessing retirement benefits on the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State

iv. determine what policy strategy the government should adopt in facilitating quick access to benefits

1.5. Research Hypotheses

Three research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. They are stated in null hypotheses.

i. There is no significant relationship between the effectiveness of pension fund administrators and facilitating quick access to retirement benefits in Edo State.

ii. There is no significant relationship between administrative bottlenecks and payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State.

iii. There is no significant relationship between excessive delay in accessing retirement benefits and the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study was carried out in Edo State and it covered the Edo State Pension Bureau and the pension funds administrators used by the Edo State government. The time scope for the study is between 2018 and 2023; this is a period of six years.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

In the course of conducting this research, the researcher encountered several constraints that posed challenges to the data collection process and, by extension, the study's findings. Acknowledging these limitations is crucial for a balanced interpretation of the research outcomes. A primary limitation was the inherent challenge associated with the reliance on primary data sourced through questionnaire. The quality and depth of the data generated were contingent on the willingness and ability of the respondents to provide full and

accurate information. Given that the subject of pension administration involves sensitive financial data and can be a matter of significant public and governmental scrutiny, some staff at both the Edo State Pension Bureau and the various Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) were initially guarded. They were constrained by official secrecy oaths and a general apprehension about discussing internal operational challenges, particularly those that could reflect poorly on their institutions. This restraint potentially limited the disclosure of crucial information regarding systemic inefficiencies or alleged mismanagement. To surmount this, the researcher provided clear and repeated assurances of the strict confidentiality of all responses, emphasizing that the data was solely for academic purposes and that neither individuals nor their specific organizations would be identified in the dissertation.

Furthermore, the study was significantly impeded by the very phenomenon it sought to investigate: bureaucratic bottlenecks and administrative red tape. Gaining official access to administer questionnaires within the government-owned Edo State Pension Bureau and the regulated financial environment of the PFAs involved navigating a labyrinth of procedural delays. Securing the necessary permissions from the relevant authorities was a time-consuming process that required immense patience and persistence. This challenge was overcome through formal and respectful correspondence with the heads of these institutions, clearly outlining the academic and policy-relevant objectives of the study. Persistent yet diplomatic follow-ups were essential to eventually obtaining the required cooperation and ensuring a high response rate.

Additionally, the scope of the study presented its own set of limitations. The research was geographically confined to Benin City, the state capital, where the headquarters of the Pension Bureau and the PFA offices are located. Consequently, the experiences and challenges faced by retirees and administrative staff in the rural and remote local

government areas of Edo State were not directly captured. This may limit the generalizability of the findings across the entire state, as administrative hurdles and access to information can be more pronounced in rural settings. While this was a deliberate delimitation to ensure a focused and manageable study, it remains a constraint on the breadth of the research.

Finally, the study's cross-sectional design, while effective for providing a snapshot of the situation, means that the data reflects the state of pension administration at a specific point in time (2024/2025). The landscape of pension policy and administration is dynamic, subject to changes in government, economic policy, and new regulatory directives from the National Pension Commission (PenCom). A longitudinal study would be required to track these changes and their impacts over time, which was beyond the practical scope and resources of this Master's research project.

Despite these limitations, the researcher is confident that the methodological rigour applied, coupled with the measures taken to mitigate these challenges particularly the high 94.8% response rate have yielded data that is sufficiently valid and reliable to meet the objectives of this study and provide a meaningful contribution to knowledge on the subject.

1.8 Significance of the study

The study of Pension administration and access to retirement’s benefits is of importance to employees in the public sectors especially in government ministries, departments and agencies. It is also of immense benefits to current and prospective retirees due to the insight that this study provides. A study of this nature is also beneficial to employees in the private sectors, policy makers, and students in tertiary institutions, government officials, pension administrators and researchers who intend to cover the gaps in literature.

1.9. Operational Clarification of Terms

Accrued pension right: The prerogative of employees to accessing his/her benefits

Administration: Refers to the systematic management, coordination, and disbursement of pension benefits by relevant government agencies and pension fund administrators in Edo State.

Bureaucratic Bottleneck: Refers to excessive administrative procedures, red tape, or systemic inefficiencies within pension management institutions that delay or obstruct retirees' access to their benefits.

Contributory pension: Monthly contributions from employees' salaries

Corrupt Practice: Denotes any deliberate misconduct, fraud, or abuse of power by pension administrators or government officials in handling retirees' benefits.

Harmonization: Pertains to the standardization and equitable adjustment of pension benefits across all retiree categories in Edo State.

Gratuity: Money given to employees at the end of service year

Pension scheme: Employee's savings usually deducted from their salaries on monthly basis

Retirement: Time an employee or a worker finish working for his/her organization

1.10 Organization of the work

This research work consists of five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction which has the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, research hypotheses, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study, operational clarification of terms and organization of the study. Chapter two is made up of literature review/theoretical framework and the organizational context of the study. Chapter three is made up of the methodology which comprises the research design, population of the study, sample size, sampling technique, instrument of data collection, sources of data collection, method of data analysis. Chapter four is made up of data

presentation, analysis**,** and discussion of major findingswhile Chapter five is the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 The Concept of Pension

Pension refers to the benefit paid to an employee on retirement or after attaining statutory required service age. When employees retire from active service, they expect the government to continue to pay those salaries or honorarium to sustain themselves in their retirement age. Odia & Okoye (2012) assert that some of these employees invest some of these funds in small scale businesses in order to continue to carter for their families. The expectation of benefits at retirement provides employees a sense of satisfaction and security because it provides them a very interesting and fulfilling times after long years of active service. The Nigeria Government as well as other nations in the globe ensures that adequate plans are put in place for their employees at retirement (Adegbite, 2017).

Pension also refers to the voluntary savings employees in both public and private sector contribute towards their retirement. It is central to employees because it guarantees their financial stability after their long term of service in their respective organizations, whether public or private. It builds the confidence and act as springboard for effective productivity. The concept of pension administration has gained popularity in recent times due to several pension organizations that have surfaced in Nigeria. Pension administration refers to the ways and manners employee's funds are invested for their retirement purpose. The government contributes a certain percentage while the employees contributes a certain percentage, and on employees' retirement, the funds are expected to go back to the employees (PenCom, 2019).

2.1.2 Pension Fund Administration in Nigeria

The Pension Reform Act of 2004 created the National Pension Commission (PenCom) and introduced the contributory pension scheme which led to the establishment of Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs). In 2004, the Pension Reform Act (PRA) was signed into law in Nigeria and in 2005 PenCom started licensing PFAs to manage and invest pension contribution, while in 2006 the first set of PFAs started operations. The main purpose of introducing PFAs was to manage and invest pension contributions and also to provide retirement benefits to contributors. They also offered pension products and services (Anyim, Olusanya & Okere, 2014).

The PRA (2014) was signed into law by President Goodluck Jonathan in 2014, which was to repeal the pension reform act No 2 of 2004 and established contributory pension scheme for both the public and private sectors in Nigeria. Some of the major highlights of the new pension act include, the need to increase the minimum number of employees required to make mandatory contributions under the act, it is important to note that the new pension also help in the imposition of fines and penalties on Pension Fund Administration (PFA) for failure to meet their obligations to contributors and violation of the provision of the Act. The Pension Act of 2014 regulates the administration of the contributory pension scheme in Nigeria ensuring that everyone who has worked receives their retirement benefits as and when due (Uche & Mohammed, 2022).

2.1.3 Contributory Pension Reform

A pension reform fundamentally represents a structural overhaul of a nation's retirement income system, designed to enhance its sustainability, efficiency, and coverage. Its primary function is to ensure that individuals accumulate sufficient savings during their working lives to provide a stable income upon retirement, thereby reducing old-age poverty and reliance on state budgets. Key features of a modern pension reform often include a shift

from defined benefit schemes, where the payout is predetermined by salary and years of service, to defined contribution schemes, where the payout depends on accumulated contributions and investment returns. This shift is frequently accompanied by the establishment of a fully funded system, where today's contributions are saved and invested to pay for future benefits, contrasting with pay-as-you-go systems where current workers fund current retirees. The importance of such reforms cannot be overstated; they are critical for long-term fiscal stability by curbing escalating public pension liabilities, for fostering national savings and deepening domestic capital markets through the accumulation of long-term investment funds, and for promoting social equity and economic security by ensuring that retirement benefits are paid promptly and reliably (Adeyemi, 2023).

The Nigerian experience with pension reform is a quintessential example of this transformative process. Prior to 2004, Nigeria operated a largely dysfunctional Defined Benefit Scheme for its public sector, which was plagued by monumental unfunded liabilities, estimated in the trillions of Naira, leading to widespread non-payment of pensions, tragic scenes of elderly retirees protesting for their entitlements, and systemic corruption within the management of pension funds. This untenable situation catalyzed the historic introduction of the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) through the Pension Reform Act (PRA) of 2004. This landmark legislation represented a radical paradigm shift, establishing a mandatory, fully funded, and privately managed pension system for employees in the public service of the Federation, the Federal Capital Territory, and the private sector with five or more employees. The Act mandated minimum contribution rates of 7.5% from both the employer and employee, based on the employee's monthly emoluments, creating individual Retirement Savings Accounts (RSAs) for every worker. To govern this new architecture, the Act established the National Pension Commission (PenCom) as the independent regulatory and supervisory body, while introducing two

pivotal private sector entities: Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) to manage the RSAs and invest the pension funds, and Pension Fund Custodians (PFCs) to hold the pension assets in custody, thereby ensuring a clear separation of functions to prevent fraud and misappropriation of funds (Nwabuokei, 2024).

The operationalization of this new system hinged on the critical role of the Pension Fund Administrators. These licensed private companies were tasked with the core functions of registering contributors, maintaining their Retirement Savings Accounts, collecting contributions, investing and managing the pension funds in a diversified portfolio as prescribed by PenCom, and processing and paying retirement benefits to retirees. The introduction of PFAs fostered a competitive environment where Nigerian workers could choose their preferred PFA, which in turn drove innovation and improved customer service across the industry. Guided by stringent investment regulations from PenCom, the PFAs pooled the pension contributions and channeled them into a variety of asset classes, including Federal Government securities, corporate bonds, and equities. This activity has been instrumental in mobilizing a massive pool of long-term domestic capital, with the value of pension assets under management growing exponentially from a negligible base to become a cornerstone of Nigeria's financial system, providing stable funding for government projects and corporate growth while delivering returns to contributors (Ojo, 2025).

After a decade of implementation, the PRA 2004 was reviewed to address emerging challenges and expand the scheme's scope, leading to the Pension Reform Act of 2014. This amended legislation retained the core framework of the CPS but introduced significant enhancements. It expanded coverage to employees of organizations with less than three employees, a crucial step towards incorporating Nigeria's vast informal sector. The 2014 Act also increased the minimum total contribution from 15% to 18% of an employee's

monthly emoluments, with the employer's portion rising to 10% and the employee's remaining at 8%, thereby boosting the retirement savings potential for workers. Furthermore, it provided a legal framework for contributors who were temporarily out of employment to access a portion of their savings, introduced stricter enforcement mechanisms and heavier penalties for violations to bolster compliance, and strengthened the provisions for a guaranteed minimum pension to protect retirees from very low balances. The cumulative impact of these reforms, from 2004 to 2014, has been profoundly positive, transitioning Nigeria from a pension system on the brink of collapse to one that is more transparent, stable, and progressively growing. Despite persistent challenges, particularly in deepening coverage within the informal sector and streamlining the benefits payment process, the Nigerian pension reform stands as a monumental public policy achievement, securing the financial future of millions and contributing significantly to the nation's economic resilience (Ighodalo & Eke, 2023).

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Level of effectiveness of pension fund administrators in facilitating the quick access of retirees to their benefits

The level of effectiveness of Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) in facilitating quick access for retirees to their benefits presents a complex and often contentious picture, marked by significant institutional progress yet persistently challenged by operational delays that critically impact retirees. The foundational architecture of the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), which legally separates the roles of the PFAs who process benefits and the Pension Fund Custodians (PFCs) who hold the funds, was designed specifically for security and efficiency. In theory, this system should enable a streamlined process. The PFAs' effectiveness is most evident in their development of robust digital platforms that allow for the pre-retirement verification and submission of documents, a marked improvement from

the paper-based systems of the pre-reform era. Furthermore, for retirees opting for programmed withdrawals, the process is largely automated, ensuring monthly payments are made reliably and on time, which represents a core success of the system administered by the PFAs (Adekunle, 2024).

However, this theoretical efficiency often crumbles in the face of practical realities, particularly for retirees seeking to access their lump-sum benefits upon retirement. The most significant bottleneck is not necessarily within the direct control of the PFAs but lies in the mandatory approval chain from the National Pension Commission (PenCom). For any significant withdrawal, especially the lump sum, the PFA must submit the retiree's application to PenCom for final approval. This centralization, intended as a regulatory check, frequently becomes a source of protracted delays, with retirees sometimes waiting for months without communication. While PFAs are often the visible point of contact and thus bear the brunt of retiree frustration, their effectiveness is hamstrung by this regulatory bottleneck. A 2024 survey on retiree experiences found that over 60% of respondents cited the delay between submission by their PFA and approval from PenCom as the most stressful part of accessing their benefits (Financial Derivatives Company, 2024).

The effectiveness of a PFA is therefore increasingly measured not just by its investment performance but by its ability to navigate this bureaucratic labyrinth on behalf of its clients. Proactive PFAs have invested in dedicated client relationship teams for retirees, who track applications and provide status updates, thereby mitigating the anxiety of waiting. Conversely, retirees with less engaged PFAs report being left in the dark for extended periods. Another critical area of delay involves the submission of incomplete or inaccurate documentation by the retiree, a process where PFAs have a direct responsibility to guide and educate their clients effectively. The more effective PFAs have developed

comprehensive pre-retirement counseling services and checklists to minimize these errors, while others remain largely reactive (Okoro, 2023).

The effectiveness of PFAs in facilitating quick access to benefits is a tale of two systems. They have been highly effective in establishing a secure, transparent, and reliable framework for the ongoing payment of pensions, a monumental achievement compared to the pre-2004 era. Yet, their effectiveness is severely compromised by systemic and regulatory delays in the critical initial lump-sum payment phase. The perceived speed of access is thus less a function of the individual PFA's operational efficiency alone and more a product of the integrated, and often sluggish, performance of the entire chain involving the employer, the PFA, and the regulator. Until the approval process is further decentralized or digitized at the regulatory level, the ability of PFAs to deliver truly quick access to benefits will remain partial and inconsistent, leaving many retirees in a state of financial uncertainty at a most vulnerable time in their lives (Nwankwo, 2025).

2.2.2 Effect of administrative bottlenecks to payment of gratuities to pensioners

The effect of administrative bottlenecks on the payment of gratuities to pensioners is profoundly detrimental, creating a cascade of negative consequences that extend from severe personal hardship for the retiree to broader economic and systemic instability. These bottlenecks, which are procedural, bureaucratic, or regulatory delays within the pension processing chain, act as a critical barrier between retirees and the financial benefits they have accrued over a lifetime of work. The most immediate and severe impact is the socio-economic crisis inflicted upon the pensioners. After decades of service, retirees find themselves in a state of financial limbo, unable to meet basic needs such as housing, healthcare, and nutrition. This delay transforms what should be a period of rest and dignity into one of intense stress, anxiety, and vulnerability, eroding the very social safety net that the pension system was designed to provide (Adebayo, 2023).

Financially, the value of the gratuity is systematically eroded by inflation during the delay period. A sum that was substantial at the point of retirement can lose significant purchasing power after months or even years of administrative inertia, effectively imposing a hidden tax on the retiree. This forces many pensioners, who are often not in the best health, to seek informal and often exploitative credit to survive, plunging them into debt. Furthermore, the inability to access this lump sum prevents retirees from executing crucial post-retirement plans, such as investing in a small business, settling mortgages, or supporting their children's education, thereby stifling intergenerational economic mobility and perpetuating cycles of poverty within families (Nnamani & Okafor, 2024).

From an institutional perspective, these bottlenecks severely undermine public trust in the entire pension system. When retirees experience protracted delays, it creates a crisis of confidence not only in the specific administering agency but also in the government's commitment to the welfare of its elderly citizens. This disillusionment can lead to social unrest, with frequent protests by pensioners becoming a common sight, and can discourage active workers from making voluntary contributions, seeing the system as unreliable. For the government and pension fund administrators, these delays create a parallel administrative burden, as they must deal with a continuous stream of inquiries, complaints, and appeals from aggrieved pensioners, diverting resources that could be used to improve the system's overall efficiency (Ejiofor, 2023).

The root causes of these administrative bottlenecks are often multifaceted, including bureaucratic redundancy where a single application requires multiple, sequential signatures from different departments; a slow and often manual verification process to confirm a retiree's service history and records; inadequate funding where governments fail to budget sufficiently for annual gratuity payments, leading to a queue system; and legacy technological infrastructure that is incompatible with modern digital processing, causing

needless delays (Iweze, 2025). In conclusion, administrative bottlenecks in gratuity payment are not merely a procedural inefficiency but a fundamental failure of the social contract. They inflict direct financial and psychological harm on retirees, weaken the integrity and trust in the pension system, and negatively impact the broader economy by immobilizing capital that could otherwise be productively deployed. Addressing these delays is therefore not just an administrative priority but a critical moral and economic imperative (Salami, 2024).

2.2.3 Effect of excessive delays in accessing retirement benefits on the wellbeing of retirees

Excessive delays in accessing retirement benefits constitute a profound crisis that critically undermines the wellbeing of retirees across multiple dimensions, transforming their anticipated period of rest into one of severe hardship and vulnerability. The most immediate and devastating impact is on the financial and material wellbeing of the retiree. Suddenly stripped of their primary income, yet unable to access the savings accrued over a lifetime of work, retirees are plunged into a state of financial precarity. This limbo prevents them from meeting fundamental needs such as secure housing, adequate nutrition, and essential healthcare. The stress of being unable to pay for medications or utilities creates a direct pathway to deteriorating physical health, exacerbating age-related conditions. Furthermore, the value of the delayed benefits is systematically eroded by inflation, meaning the real purchasing power of their savings diminishes with each passing month, a phenomenon that acts as a cruel hidden tax on their patience (Adebayo, 2023).

The psychological toll of these delays is equally severe and often interwoven with the financial strain. The constant uncertainty and perceived injustice of not receiving earned benefits trigger intense anxiety, chronic stress, and a deep sense of helplessness. This sustained psychological distress is a significant risk factor for the development of mental

health disorders, including clinical depression and anxiety disorders. The situation is profoundly disheartening, as it betrays the social contract and the expectation of dignity in old age, leading to feelings of worthlessness and social abandonment. For many, their retirement savings represent not just money, but the tangible outcome of their life's labour; its denial can feel like an invalidation of their entire career (Nnamani & Okafor, 2024).

The impact also extends severely into the social and relational domain of a retiree's wellbeing. The financial dependence forced upon them by administrative delays can strain family relationships, as retirees may be compelled to rely on their adult children or relatives for basic sustenance, potentially creating tension and a loss of autonomy. This loss of financial independence can be emasculating and shameful, causing individuals to withdraw from social circles to avoid the stigma of being unable to pay their way. Consequently, social isolation increases, which is a known contributor to poor mental and physical health outcomes. The inability to fulfill grand parenting roles, such as providing gifts or contributing to grandchildren's education, further deepens the emotional distress and sense of failure (Ejiofor, 2023).

Beyond the individual, these delays create a damaging ripple effect that undermines the entire pension system. The loss of trust in the system discourages active workers from making voluntary contributions, fearing they will face the same fate. It also tarnishes the reputation of the government and pension administrators, often leading to social unrest as seen in frequent protests by aggrieved pensioners. In essence, excessive delays in benefit access are not a mere administrative glitch but a fundamental breach of trust that attacks the core pillars of retiree wellbeing, financial security, physical health, mental peace, and social standing thereby turning their golden years into a period of immense struggle and diminished quality of life (Salami, 2024).

2.2.4 Government Policy strategy in facilitating quick access to retirees'benefits

Government policy strategy is paramount in facilitating quick access to retirees' benefits serving as the foundational framework that dictates the efficiency security and timeliness of the entire pension system. An effective strategy must be multi-faceted addressing regulatory processes technological infrastructure and institutional accountability. A critical policy intervention involves the simplification and digitization of the benefits claims process. This entails creating a centralized digital portal for retirees to submit all required documentation online thereby eliminating the delays associated with physical paperwork and in-person submissions. Policy can mandate the integration of databases between pension administrator's government agencies like tax authorities and identity management systems to enable real-time verification of a retiree's records and eligibility. This automated cross-checking significantly reduces the verification period which is a major bottleneck. Furthermore establishing a clear and legally enforced service level agreement (SLA) that stipulates a maximum processing time for benefit applications is a crucial policy tool. This SLA must be backed by accountability measures that impose penalties on administering bodies for non-compliance creating a strong incentive for efficiency (National Pension Commission, 2023). To address the challenge of an aging population potentially less familiar with digital tools policy should also facilitate the establishment of dedicated customer service support lines and physical help desks in key locations to provide guidance and troubleshoot issues ensuring no retiree is left behind due to the digital divide (Adekunle, 2024).

Finally a robust government strategy must include rigorous oversight and continuous system reform. This involves strengthening the capacity and mandate of the pension regulator to conduct periodic audits of the benefit payment processes of Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) and other involved agencies. The regulator's reports should be public

highlighting systemic bottlenecks and naming entities responsible for delays. Policy should also encourage or mandate the development of comprehensive pre-retirement counselling programs. These programs would educate potential retirees on the required procedures and documents years in advance ensuring they are well-prepared and their applications are complete upon submission. By strategically combining regulatory streamlining technological innovation enforced accountability and proactive support government policy can transform the retiree experience from one of uncertainty and delay to one of predictability and dignity (Nwankwo, 2025).

2.2.5 Pension Administration and its challenges in Nigeria

According to Kalu &Attamah (2015), employees are happy to retire in order to enjoy their savings over the years, however, in the third world countries, the situation is totally different because of corruption and other social vices in the state. Advanced societies are able to help retirees achieved a purposeful living as a result of honesty, transparency, accountability, professionalism etc., all these sterling attributes are lacking in the third world countries who are often found in web of corruption. The need to change these ugly narratives have led to several research in the subject matter of pension administration in Nigeria.

The challenge of non-harmonization of retirees' benefits is also related to non-payment of certain percentage increase in retirees' benefits. There have been several complaints of non-payment of consequential adjustment to retirees' pensions resulting from certain percentage increase in wages and salaries. Over the years as well as approved minimum wage. Many Federal and state pensioners under the old Defined Benefit Scheme were still being owed arrears of token percentage increases granted them in the past, in line with Section 173 (3) of the Constitution (Takor,2017).

Furthermore, the issue of administrative and bureaucratic bottlenecks experienced by retiree in processing their retirement papers is another challenge confronting retirees in the country,

especially retirees under the old Defined Benefit Scheme. According to (the Guardian, 2021),an investigation by the 'British Broadcasting Company (BBC) Africa Eye' into pensions in Cross River State of Nigeria, revealed an unfair and corrupt system where government workers solicit for pacification and bribes before paying out pensions to retirees. There have been instances where many retirees were exposed to dehumanizing conditions while some even collapsed on the queue during screening and verification exercises (Apere, 2017). This amounts to administrative and bureaucratic constraints in the retirees' access to their benefits and entitlements.

Nigeria made a major institutional reform in her pension administration in 2004 through the enactment of the Pension Reform Act 2004 that introduced the contributory pension scheme. Prior to this time, the public sector operated the Defined Benefits (DB) or Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG) scheme. This was a non-contributory pension scheme funded 100% by the government through statutory budgetary provision from various tiers of government for each fiscal year (Anyim, Olusanya & Okere,2014 and Premium Times, 2017).The Defined Benefits or Pay-As-You-Go pension scheme was plagued with the challenge of huge pension liabilities resulting from the lack of adequate and timely budgetary provision, increases in salaries and pensions as well a lack of effective supervision, regulatory control and accountability which created economic hardship to pensioners (Ibrahim, 2005, ldowu,2006, Urhoghide & Ogiedu, 2008).

Odia & Okoye (2012) assert that, a major challenge faced by pensioners under the old Defined Benefit Scheme was the non-payment or delay in the payment of pension and gratuity by both the federal and state governments. Many retirees are living in abject poverty as a result of non-payment or delay in the payment of their entitlements, while some have died without earning their gratuity or pension (Akhiajemi, Ifeanecho & Abu, 2018). The delay in payment of retirees' pension, gratuity, pension arrears and pension increments

were still being experienced, resulting in untold hardship to retirees who had to wait for several months or years before receiving their entitlements (Urhoghide & Ogiedu, 2008).

There is also the issue of harmonization and upward review of retiree's benefits. Empirical evidence revealed that pensioner's benefits are still very low even when the Government of Nigeria increases the salaries of its workers, retirees' monthly pensions are sometimes overlooked. The issue of timely payment of retirees' benefits who have retired honorably after a period of thirty-five years are not given adequate consideration. This has led to the death of pensioners who are often not happy with the ways they are treated when they retire from active service (Anyim, Olusanya & Okere,2014).

2.2.6. Development of Pension Administration in Nigeria

The influx of the colonial masters into the African continent brought numerous innovations. The British administration established a pension plan for the colonial officials who were to administer the territory and later extended it to Nigerians who were working under them. The first pension regulation in Nigeria was endorsed in 1951 and transmitted in 1952, it had retroactive effective 1st January, 1946 (Nwanisobi & Okogbue, 2021).

The expatriate pension law was premeditated for the United Kingdom administrators who were moved from post to post in the vast British Empire, the intension was to ensure that they maintained continuity of service wherever and whenever they were sent to serve. The colonial pension law made by granting of pension at the pleasure of the Auditor- General under the ordinance therefore, pension was not an automatic rights of Nigerians , it could be withheld or denied of an officer if he was found with quality of negligence of duty or misconduct while in service (Nwanisobi & Okogbue, 2021).

When we consider the subject of pension administration in Nigeria, both Public and private sector is usually the focus of scholars, the pension covering the private sector retirement scheme was established to provide job satisfaction to workers who are not under the

government of Nigeria. Although there are no laws that compels the private sector company to have its own special pension scheme. The laws provides the Federal government joint tax board to handle pension schemes that have to do with the private sectors (Akhiajemi, Ifeanecho, & Abu, 2018).

The new pension law provides the opportunity for the private sector to adhere to the national pension commission. The private sector pension scheme in Nigeria can be categorized into three groups which includes:

1. Insured provident fund
2. Non-insured (private) provident fund
3. Defined benefits plans

2.2.7 The UDOJI Pension Reform

Nigeria have experience various reforms in pension administration. The public services review commission (1972-1977) also known as Udoji commission, was a mile stone in the annals of the Nigeria public service because of its comprehensive review work and land mark recommendations encompassing all levels of government (Adeyemi & Ogunyomi, 2024). The commission's recommendations with respect to pension scheme in the public services were based on the following basic principles.

i. Payment of pension or gratuity should be seen as deferred pay.
ii. The vesting of pension rights in the employee. These means that pension benefits for which a public servant qualifies are his, by rights and therefore cannot be withheld, reduced or otherwise tempered with.
iii. Payment of pensions and gratuities shall be charged on and paid out of the money voted for that purpose by government, a non-contributory, pay-as-you-go arrangement.

iv. All public sector schemes should be modified to promote mobility of labor within the public services.

v. All persons who come within the umbrella of the pension act circulars, standard directors and rules (refer to above) should be eligible for same retirement benefits.

vi. The private sector companies should continue to run their individual pension schemes.

vii. Strengthening and recognition of the national provident fund as autonomous body to carry out its responsibilities.

viii. Whenever new salary scales are approved, there should be corresponding change in retirement benefits (Adeyemi & Ogunyomi, 2024).

2.2.8 Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) Decree No 73 of 1993

This scheme was introduced by government to improve the benefits and operations of the National provident fund. The decree was promulgated in August 1993 with retroactive effect from 1st January 1992, however, due to the need to examine certain issues arising from its provision; its operations were delayed until 1st July 1994. The principal provisions of the decree are dealt with herein. Its coverage include every person employed by a company incorporated (or deemed to be incorporated) under the Companies Allied Matters Act 1977, or employed by a partnership or in any other case, where the number of persons employed is not less than five;-invalidity pension, invalidity grant, retirement pension, retirement grant, survivor's pension, survivor's grant and funeral grant (Okpara, 2023).

The scheme states that fund shall be under the management and control of a management board comprising, chairman, two representatives each of Nigerian Employees Consultative Association (NECA) and Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), one representative each of Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), three executive directors and managing directors. There are very few issues

requiring further attention from government and management board of the fund. Gratuity is a benefit of importance generally provided in retirement scheme of government and corporate organizations. There will be no justification for its omission. The funeral grant is a welcome provision though the rate stipulated is too low for its purpose (Okpara, 2023).

The commission on review of civil service pension scheme (1998) recommended that it should be 70% of minimum wage. In government employment, wage should be recognized as a living wage for the lowest paid worker, any worker whose retirement benefit pension is below that level is therefore subsisting in penury which is unacceptable for retirement under a social security scheme (Ejiofor & Nwosu, 2024).

2.2.9 Strategies for Effective Pension Administration in Edo State Civil Service

The factors for effective pension administration in Edo State Civil Service are: Record management is the application of systematic control concerning the creation, maintenance, and destruction of records required in conjunction with the operation of an organization, in the process of and payments of retirement benefits, records is the pivot on which the entire exercise revolves. A good pension administrator relies on the information and record kept on the retiree, from the day he/ she entered the public service until his final exit (Adeboye & Imafidon, 2024). Record entails the administrative procedures usually taken to ensure that the computation of an officer retiring benefits is smooth and devoid of problems (Adeboye & Imafidon, 2024).

It is essential that an officer's benefit should be paid if he is qualified and on time to make it meaningful. In the case of pension administration, papers largely constitute part of the materials needed to operate. It follows therefore, that these papers should be recorded, classified, filled, and passed to schedule officers for attention and effective preservation. The filed papers must be stored and retrieved when needed; the place where these activities take place is called a registry. The registry is in fact the shop window of any modern

organization or industry today. It is the first contact point in any organization and it should therefore not be underrated if the management is to achieve its goal (National Archives of Nigeria, 2019). This accounts for why the pension accounts and records division depends entirely on records generated and kept by the record division to function properly. At the time of employment of an officer, a file is opened; all career progressions, promotions and relevant bio-data completed by the officer throughout the course of the officer's career are kept in the file. It is this same file that pension administrators use to compute the officers benefits when he/ she bows out of service (Adeboye & Imafidon, 2024). It is therefore, necessary that proper and accurate records be kept for easy administration of pension.

The administration of pension in the public services is controlled by statute, regulations and guidelines that are issued from time to time that form the component elements in the administration of pension in Nigeria. All these acts and circulars should be properly kept as record for smooth processing of retirement benefits (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2020).

The Pension Reform Act 2004 (repealed and replaced by the Pension Reform Act 2014) provides that, in order for the Pension Reform Act 2004 and 2014 to be domesticated and operational at the state level, the enactment of a state pension law, which should conform with the provisions of the PRA 2004 and PRA 2014, was a basic requirement among others. The issue of enacting state pension law has no doubt given various state governments the leeway for not complying with the provisions of the PRA 2004 and PRA 2014 as expected. According to (National Pension Commission, 2020a), a total of twenty-four (24) states including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) had enacted pension laws on the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), while seven (7) states were at the bill passing stage and five (5) states had embarked on pension reform that are not contributory in nature (National Pension Commission, 2020b).

Edo State Government enacted her pension law in the year 2010 and keyed into the contributory pension scheme in the year 2017. The discrepancy in the domestication of the Pension Reform Act by state governments in Nigeria was bound to be detrimental to their employees. For example, Edo State employees who had five years or less to retire at the commencement of the state's contributory pension scheme in 2017 were not eligible to join the scheme. This was in line with the provisions of the Pension Reform Act 2004 and as adopted by the Edo state contributory pension law of 2017 (as amended) (Pension Reform Act, 2004; Edo State Government, 2017). Consequently, the Edo State Government started to have retirees from the state's contributory pension scheme from the year 2022.

2.3. Empirical Review

Adegbite (2017) investigated the effectiveness of pension fund administrators in ensuring timely access to retirement benefits among public sector retirees in Delta State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design, targeting all retired civil servants under the Contributory Pension Scheme in Delta State. A sample size of 380 retirees was selected using stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across different government ministries. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed significant delays in benefit payments, with 68% of respondents experiencing processing periods exceeding six months after retirement. The study identified bureaucratic bottlenecks and inadequate staffing at pension offices as major constraints affecting administrators' efficiency. Results showed only 32% of retirees received their benefits within the stipulated 3-month window prescribed by pension regulations.

Nwanna & Ogbonna (2019) examined pension fund administrators' operational efficiency in facilitating retirees' access to benefits in Lagos State, Nigeria. Using an ex-post facto research design, the study population comprised all pension fund administrators and retirees

registered with the National Pension Commission in Lagos. A sample of 250 respondents (200 retirees and 50 administrators) was selected through purposive sampling. Researchers employed both questionnaires and documentary analysis of pension payment records as research instruments. Data collection involved primary surveys and review of pension commission archives from 2015-2018. Findings indicated that while digital verification systems improved processing times, 57% of cases still experienced delays due to incomplete documentation requirements. The study reported that administrators with larger customer bases performed worse, with average payment processing times of 5.2 months compared to 3.1 months for smaller firms. Results highlighted the need for streamlined documentation processes and increased manpower in pension administration.

Eze & Okonkwo (2023) examined the impact of administrative bottlenecks on gratuity payments to retirees in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive survey design targeting 2,450 pensioners registered with the state pension board. A sample of 420 retirees was selected using systematic random sampling technique to ensure equal representation across different retirement years. Researchers used a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale as the research instrument, supplemented by interviews with pension office staff. Data was collected through direct administration of questionnaires and recorded interviews over a 3-month period. Findings revealed that 72% of respondents experienced delays exceeding 12 months in receiving gratuity payments, with complex verification processes and missing service documents cited as primary causes. The study also found that retirees who used intermediaries (agents or lawyers) had 40% faster processing times compared to those who pursued claims independently, highlighting systemic inefficiencies in the administrative process.

Adeyemi & Ibrahim (2022) studied the relationship between bureaucratic procedures and delayed gratuity payments in Ogun State, Nigeria. The research adopted a mixed-methods

approach, combining survey and case study designs. The population comprised 3,120 state government retirees from 2015-2020, with a sample of 350 selected through stratified random sampling based on retirees' former ministries. Data collection instruments included questionnaires, focus group discussions, and analysis of pension office records. Researchers collected data over 6 months through physical and electronic survey methods. Results showed that 65% of gratuity delays stemmed from administrative issues, particularly multiple verification exercises and inter-agency coordination problems between the pension office, treasury, and audit departments. The study found that each additional verification stage added an average of 4.3 months to processing time. Interestingly, retirees from education sector experienced longer delays (average 14.2 months) compared to other sectors (average 9.8 months), suggesting sector-specific administrative challenges in gratuity processing.

Okafor & Adeleke (2023) investigated the psychosocial impact of delayed retirement benefits on pensioners in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design targeting 1,850 retired civil servants registered with the state pension board. A sample of 300 retirees was selected through multistage sampling technique, combining purposive selection of local government areas with random sampling of participants. Researchers developed a structured questionnaire measuring health status, economic wellbeing, and psychological distress as research instruments. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews conducted by trained research assistants over a 4-month period. Findings revealed that 68% of respondents experienced severe financial constraints due to benefit delays, with 42% reporting inability to afford basic medications. The study found a strong correlation (r=0.72) between duration of payment delays and reported cases of depression among retirees. Additionally, 56% of participants had resorted to selling

personal belongings while awaiting their benefits, demonstrating the severe economic toll of administrative delays.

Bello & Dairo (2022) examined the health consequences of protracted retirement benefit delays among pensioners in Rivers State, Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study population comprised 2,100 retirees from both public and private sectors. A sample of 400 participants was selected through stratified random sampling based on sector and years of retirement. The research instruments included standardized health assessment questionnaires, in-depth interview guides, and medical records review templates. Data collection involved household surveys, medical check-ups, and focus group discussions conducted over 5 months. Results showed that retirees experiencing delays beyond 6 months had 3.2 times higher likelihood of developing hypertension compared to those receiving timely payments. The study also found that 61% of respondents skipped meals regularly due to financial constraints, while 38% reported deterioration in pre-existing health conditions. Qualitative data revealed profound psychological distress, with many retirees describing feelings of abandonment and loss of dignity due to the prolonged wait for their benefits.

Ojo & Adebayo (2023) conducted a study on the socioeconomic consequences of delayed retirement benefits for public sector retirees in Lagos State, Nigeria. The research utilized a mixed-methods approach combining survey and phenomenological designs. The target population consisted of 3,200 retirees registered with the Lagos State Pension Board between 2018 and 2022. A sample of 450 participants was selected through stratified random sampling technique based on retirees' former ministries and departments. The study employed structured questionnaires with Likert-scale items and semi-structured interview guides as research instruments. Data collection occurred over six months through physical distribution of questionnaires and in-depth interviews with selected participants. Findings

revealed that 73% of retirees experienced significant financial hardship due to payment delays, with 58% reporting inability to meet basic needs such as food, housing and healthcare. The study found a strong positive correlation (r = 0.81) between duration of benefit delays and reported cases of mental health challenges including anxiety and depression. Additionally, 42% of respondents had resorted to taking high-interest loans while awaiting their pensions, plunging many into debt cycles that persisted even after eventually receiving their benefits.

Uche & Mohammed (2022) examined the health implications of prolonged retirement benefit delays among pensioners in Kano State, Nigeria. The research adopted a longitudinal cohort design tracking 600 retirees over a two-year period. The study population comprised civil servants who retired from Kano State government service between 2019 and 2021. Researchers used purposive sampling to select participants representing different income levels and health statuses at retirement. Data collection instruments included medical examination reports, standardized quality-of-life questionnaires, and economic status assessment tools. Trained research assistants collected data through quarterly home visits, medical check-ups and structured interviews. Results demonstrated that retirees experiencing benefit delays exceeding six months showed 2.8 times higher incidence of stress-related illnesses compared to those receiving timely payments. The study found 64% of participants with delayed benefits reported worsened chronic conditions, while 39% had delayed necessary medical treatments due to financial constraints. Furthermore, the research revealed a disturbing trend where mortality rates among retirees awaiting benefits were 1.7 times higher than among those who received timely payments, suggesting a direct link between administrative delays and reduced life expectancy among pensioners.

Adegbite & Oluwaseun (2023) investigated the impact of digital pension policy implementation on benefit processing times in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study employed a quasi-experimental design comparing pre-policy and post-policy adoption periods, targeting 5,420 state government retirees registered with the contributory pension scheme. A sample of 623 retirees was selected through stratified random sampling technique based on retirement year cohorts. Researchers used structured questionnaires, policy documents, and pension payment records as research instruments. Data was collected through a combination of electronic surveys, physical document reviews at pension offices, and analysis of payment processing timelines over 8 months. Findings revealed that the adoption of digital verification systems reduced average benefit processing time from 9.2 months to 4.1 months, with 78% of retirees who used the online portal receiving payments within the mandated 3-month window. The study also found that policy implementation reduced physical documentation requirements by 62%, though 35% of older retirees still faced challenges adapting to the digital platform, suggesting the need for targeted support measures alongside technological reforms.

Ibrahim & Yakubu (2022) examined how streamlined verification policies affected gratuity payment efficiency in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Using a longitudinal case study design, the research tracked 1,850 local government retirees over three policy implementation phases. The population comprised all retirees from 21 local government areas between 2018-2021, with a sample of 412 selected through multistage cluster sampling. Data collection instruments included policy implementation checklists, payment timelines, and retiree satisfaction surveys. Researchers gathered data through monthly pension office records, focus group discussions with retirees, and key informant interviews with administrators over 10 months. Results showed that the "One-Time Verification" policy reduced multiple verification exercises, cutting average payment delays from 14 months to 6.5 months. The

study found that 82% of retirees under the new policy received at least partial payments within 4 months compared to 31% under the old system. However, findings also revealed persistent challenges in rural areas where 28% of retirees still experienced delays exceeding 8 months due to poor internet connectivity and limited policy awareness, indicating uneven policy implementation across geographical locations.

2.4 Gaps in Literature

Despite the valuable contributions of existing studies on pension administration in Nigeria, several research gaps remain unaddressed. First, while Adegbite (2017) and Nwanna & Ogbonna (2019) examined administrative inefficiencies in Delta and Lagos States respectively, there is limited comparative analysis of regional variations in pension management challenges across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. This gap makes it difficult to determine whether identified problems are localized or systemic nationwide. Second, existing studies like Eze & Okonkwo (2023) and Adeyemi & Ibrahim (2022) have focused primarily on procedural bottlenecks, but have not sufficiently explored the institutional corruption mechanisms that perpetuate these delays. There is need for deeper investigation into the structural and political-economic factors enabling pension fund mismanagement, particularly at state government levels where accountability mechanisms are weaker.

Third, while Okafor & Adeleke (2023) and Bello & Dairo (2022) established the health impacts of payment delays, no study has quantitatively measured the cumulative healthcare costs borne by retirees during waiting periods. Research is needed to calculate the actual financial burden on retirees forced to pay for medical care out-of-pocket due to delayed pension access. Fourth, Ojo & Adebayo (2023) and Uche & Mohammed (2022) highlighted psychological impacts but failed to examine coping mechanisms employed by retirees. There is lack of data on how retirees' survival strategies (like selling assets or taking loans) ultimately affect their long-term financial recovery even after receiving belated payments.

Fifth, though Adegbite & Oluwaseun (2023) and Ibrahim & Yakubu (2022) evaluated digital reforms, no study has developed framework for optimizing technology adoption among Nigeria's aging retiree population. Research is needed on how to design inclusive digital pension systems that accommodate technophobic retirees while maintaining efficiency.

Sixth, existing studies have not sufficiently investigated the gender dimensions of pension delays. Given Nigeria's patriarchal structures, research should examine whether female retirees (who often have discontinuous service records) experience disproportionately longer delays and harsher consequences.

Lastly, while many studies have shown that Nigeria's pension system has problems causing delays, most of this research only describes what these problems are. They tell us that retirees face long waits, bureaucratic hurdles, and suffer as a result. However, there is a major gap: we lack a clear, practical plan tailored to a specific state like Edo State that shows howto fix these interconnected problems. Previous research has not effectively connected the dots between the performance of the Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs), the government's bureaucratic red tape, the real-life suffering of retirees, and a concrete set of actions the government can take. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 Retirement Theory

The theoretical underpinning for this study is the retirement theory. Retirement theory was first propounded by Gruber and Wise in 1999. This theory encompasses various concepts and models that explain the processes, determinants, and consequences of retirement. It seeks to understand why individuals retire, the timing of retirement, and the impact of retirement on individuals and society. This theoretical framework is essential for policymakers, employers, and individuals to make informed decisions about retirement

planning and management. One of the primary perspectives in retirement theory is the economic approach, which views retirement as a decision based on financial incentives and constraints. According to this theory, individuals decide to retire when the marginal utility of leisure surpasses the marginal utility of continued work, given their financial resources, such as pensions, savings, and social security benefits (Gruber & Wise, 1999). The life-cycle hypothesis, a cornerstone of this theory, suggests that individuals plan their retirement based on expected lifetime earnings and consumption needs (Modigliani & Brumberg, 1954).

2.5.2 Application of Retirement Theory to the Present Study

The retirement theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the real-life impact of pension administration challenges faced by retirees in Edo State. These theories help us see beyond just the administrative delays and recognize how such problems disrupt retirees' lives in profound ways. The life course perspective shows us that retirement is supposed to be a carefully planned transition, but when pension payments are delayed, it throws retirees' lives into chaos, forcing them to make desperate financial decisions and altering family dynamics. The continuity theory helps explain why these payment delays are so distressing - retirees naturally want to maintain their pre-retirement lifestyle and dignity, but administrative bottlenecks make this impossible, leading to psychological stress and health problems. These theories make it clear that timely pension payments aren't just about money, but about helping retirees successfully navigate this major life change. For Edo State, this means pension reforms need to consider how administrative processes affect retirees' overall wellbeing, not just focus on technical fixes. The theories also highlight how pension problems create ripple effects - when one retiree suffers payment delays, it impacts their entire family network and community position. This theoretical understanding suggests that improving pension administration in Edo State could have benefits that go far beyond

just solving payment delays, potentially enhancing retirees' health, family stability, and community status. Essentially, these theories help us see pension administration as a crucial support system for successful aging, rather than just a bureaucratic process.

2.6 Organizational Context of the Study

The Edo State Pension Bureau is responsible for managing pensions in Edo State, Nigeria. The bureau has launched an online pension portal to streamline pension administration processes and enhance accessibility for retirees. This portal allows retirees to access their pension accounts online, view their pension balances and payment history, and estimate their pension benefits using pension calculators (Edo State Pension Bureau, 2025).

The Edo State Pension Bureau has several departments that work together to ensure efficient pension administration. These departments include:

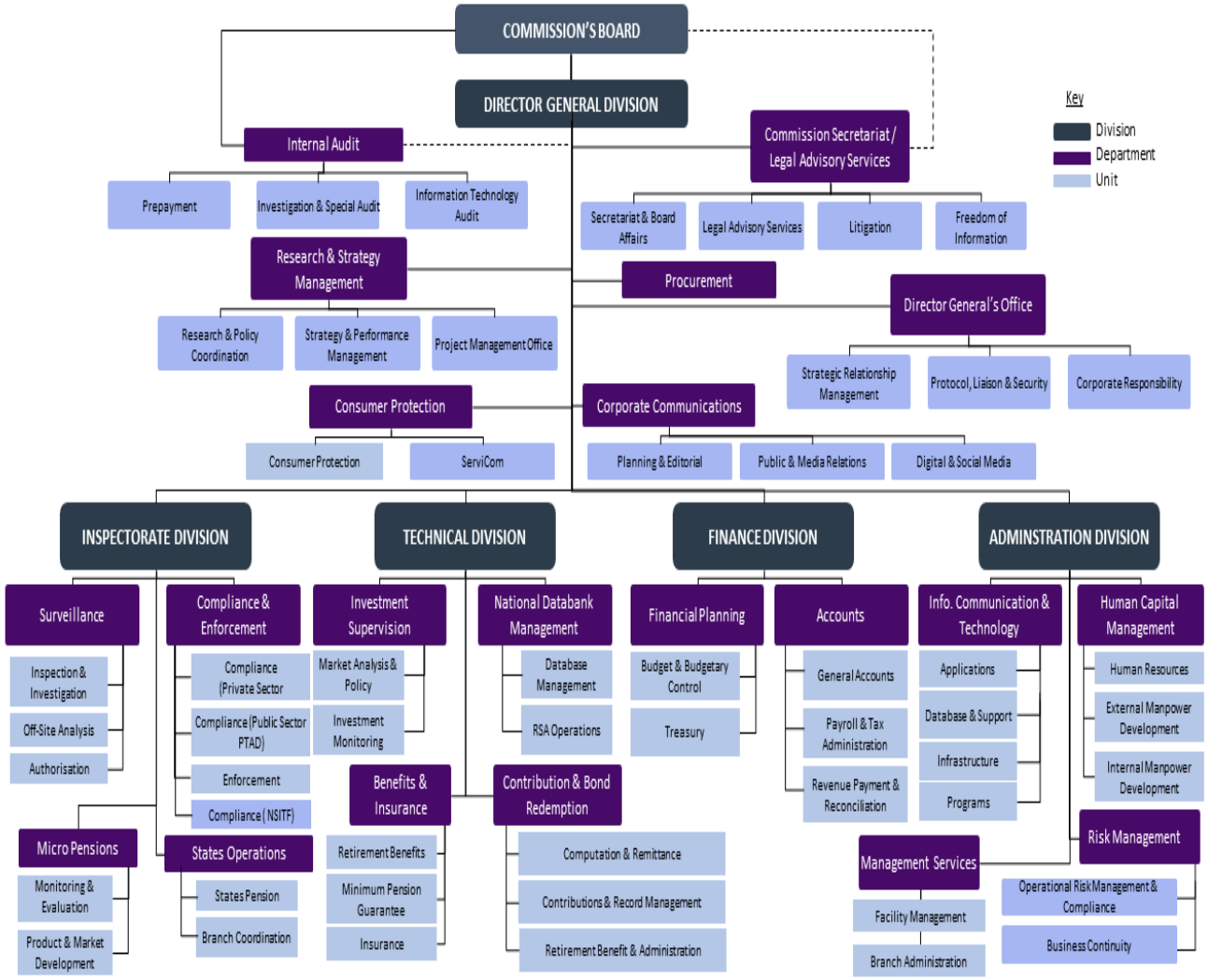
Pension Administration Department: Responsible for enrolling, verifying, and managing pension accounts for retirees.

Finance Department: Manages the financial aspects of pension administration, including budgeting, revenue collection, and investment management.

Customer Service Department: Serves as the primary point of contact for retirees, assisting with pension inquiries, requests, and grievances.

Legal and Compliance Department: Ensures compliance with pension laws, regulations, and policies, and provides legal guidance on pension-related matters.

Organizational Structure of Pension Funds Commission



Source: Edo State Pension Bureau, (2025)

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The descriptive research design was used in the study. Descriptive research design is a type of research methodology that aims to accurately describe and document the characteristics, properties and features of a particular phenomenon, population, or situation.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population for this study is 127. This consist of the staff of the Edo State Pension Bureau, which had a confirmed staff strength of twenty-five (25) personnel at the time of the research (Edo State Pension Bureau, 2025). These employees were distributed across various specialized departments, with the highest concentration in the Finance & Accounts, Benefits Administration, and Data Management & ICT units, which were considered the most labor-intensive.The second group consisted of employees working at the offices of the fifteen (15) Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) with a visible and active operational presence within Benin City, Edo State. The combined staff strength across all these 15 PFA offices was determined to be one hundred and two (102), as detailed in the table below.

Table 3.1: Staff Strength of Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) in Edo State

S/N	Pension Fund Administrator (PFA)	Staff Strength
1	AIICO Pension Managers Limited	7
2	ARM Pension Managers (PFA) Ltd	5
3	CrusaderSterling Pensions Limited	8
4	FCMB Pensions Limited	6
5	Fidelity Pension Managers Limited	7
6	Leadway Pension PFA Ltd	8
7	NLPC Pension Fund Administrators Limited	5
8	OAK Pensions Limited	6
9	PAL Pensions Limited	7
10	Premium Pension Limited	5
11	Radix Pension Managers Limited	8
12	Tangerine APT Pensions Limited	6
13	Trustfund Pensions Plc	7
14	Veritas Glanvills Pensions Limited	5
15.	Stanbic IBTC Pension Managers Limited	12
	Total	**102**

Source: Various PFAs listed, (2025)

Therefore, the total population for this study was one hundred and twenty-seven (127), comprising 25 staff from the Pension Bureau and 102 staff from the 15 PFAs.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was one hundred and twenty-seven (127) respondents. This figure represents the entire population under investigation, comprising all twenty-five (25) employees of the Edo State Pension Bureau and all one hundred and two (102) employees from the fifteen Pension Fund Administrators in Benin City.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This is a census study as the entire population is being used. This method was adopted because the entire population was both identifiable and manageable in size.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

The study utilized data from both primary and secondary sources. The researcher used questionnaire to formulate research questions relevant to the research objectives in order to guide respondents and enable them express their opinions. In addition, the secondary data was collected to complement the primary data. The secondary data were sourced from textbooks, government documents, academic journal, articles and internet source among others.

3.6 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was used for this research. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections ranging from section A and B. Section A comprised of the demographic data while sections B relates to the research questions in the study. The rating scale was based on five-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed; Agreed; Undecided; Disagreed; Strongly Disagreed.

3.7 Validity of the Research Instruments

The structured questionnaire was presented to my supervisor, who after perusing it made appropriate modifications on its validity. The corrections were carried out in accordance with the instruction and guidance provided.

3.8 Reliability of the Research Instrument

A reliability test was carried out with using 30 members of staff under Edo State Pension Bureau and Pension Fund Administrators (15 employees from each). The Cronbach alpha statistical technique was used to measure the reliability of the instrument through reliance of the given value of 0.715, which indicated that the instrument was reliable for the study.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Upon administration and retrieval, the questionnaire was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics included simple frequency and percentages while the inferential statistics, which is the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyze the hypotheses in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data collected in the field for the study. The data analysis reflected the four research questions and corresponding hypotheses formulated for the study.

Table 4.1: Rate of Return of Questionnaire

Questionnaire Administered	Questionnaire Retrieved	Rate of Return
125	109	87.2%

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.1 shows that a total of 115 copies of the questionnaire were administered on staff of the Edo State Pension Bureau and that of the 14 PFAs. 109 copies of the questionnaires were retrieved and found usable for the study. This represents an87.2% retrieval or response rate.

4.1 Data Presentation

Section A: Demographic Analysis of Respondents

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	58	53.2%
Female	51	46.8%
Total	**109**	**100%**

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.2 shows the gender distribution of respondents. Slightly more than half of the respondents (53.2% or 58 respondents) were male, while 46.8% (51 respondents) were female. This shows a relatively balanced gender representation with a small majority being male.

Table 4.3: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
18-30 years	41	37.6%
31-40 years	36	33.0%
41-50 years	22	20.2%
51 years and above	10	9.2%
Total	**109**	**100%**

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The age distribution in Table 4.3 reveals that younger adults form a significant portion of the respondent pool, with those aged 18-30 constituting of (33.0% or 36 respondents). The 31-40 years as the largest group (37.6% or 41 respondents), indicating that a combined 70.6% of respondents fall within the 18-40 age range. Middle-aged respondents (41-50 years) account for 20.2% (22 individuals), while those aged 51 and above represent the smallest segment at 9.2% (10 people). This skew toward younger demographics suggests the survey captured mainly working-age adults in their prime career years.

Table 4.4: Marital Status Distribution of Respondents

Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Single	43	39.4%
Married	58	53.2%
Divorced	8	7.4%
Total	**109**	**100%**

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The marital status breakdown in Table 4.4 shows that married respondents formed the majority at 53.2% (58 respondents), while single individuals accounted for 39.4% (43 respondents). Divorced respondents made up a smaller proportion at 7.4% (8 respondents). This distribution reflects a typical adult population where most people are married, with a significant single population and a smaller divorced segment.

Table 4.5: Qualification Distribution of Respondents

Education Level	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Secondary or below	14	12.8%
Diploma/NCE	26	23.9%
Bachelor's Degree	47	43.1%
Postgraduate	22	20.2%
Total	**109**	**100%**

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Education levels of respondents in Table 4.5 reveals that the majority of participants were fairly educated - 43.1% (47 respondents) held bachelor's degrees and another 20.2% (22 respondents) had postgraduate qualifications. Those with diplomas or NCE certificates accounted for 23.9% (26respondents), while only 12.8% (14 respondents) had secondary

education or less. This indicates the sample was predominantly made up of educated and enlightened respondents who had a good understanding of the subject of study.

4.2 Data Analysis

Research Question One: What is the role of the pension fund administrators in facilitating the quick access of retirees to their benefits in Edo State?

Table 4.6: Role of the pension fund administrators in facilitating the quick access of retirees to their benefits in Edo State

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
It is the role of the PFAs to provide the paperwork to facilitate access of retirees to their benefits.	41 (37.6%)	37 (33.9%)	13 (11.9%)	12 (11.0%)	6 (5.5%)
The incidence of multiple retirement savings account numbers may hinder the quick access to retirement benefits.	48 (44.0%)	38 (34.9%)	9 (8.3%)	8 (7.3%)	6 (5.5%)
Providing relevant education and sensitization by the PFAs to retirees would help to facilitate access to retirement benefits.	57 (52.3%)	36 (33.0%)	8 (7.3%)	5 (4.6%)	3 (2.8%)
It is the responsibility of the PFAs to create awareness on the relevant documents to be presented by retirees in processing their benefits.	50 (45.9%)	39 (35.8%)	11 (10.1%)	6 (5.5%)	3 (2.8%)

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The data in Table 4.6 concerning research question one, which sought to find out the role of the pension fund administrators in facilitating the quick access of retirees to their benefits in Edo State, shows a strong and consistent consensus among the 109 respondents. The findings reveal clear expectations for the PFAs to take a more proactive and supportive role. Looking at the first statement about PFAs providing paperwork, 71.5% of respondents (37.6% strongly agreeing and 33.9% agreeing) believe this is indeed a core responsibility of the PFAs. Only 16.5% disagree with this notion, reinforcing the conclusion

that most retirees expect PFAs to actively handle and simplify the necessary documentation process.

When it comes to the issue of multiple retirement savings accounts, an overwhelming 78.9% of respondents (44.0% strongly agreeing and 34.9% agreeing) perceive this as a major obstacle that hinders quick access to benefits. This suggests that account consolidation or better data management systems are critically needed to streamline the process for retirees. The very small proportion of dissenters (12.8%) confirms that this is a widely recognized and pressing issue within the system.

The importance of education and awareness programmes stood out most prominently in the responses. A remarkable 85.3% of participants (52.3% strongly agreeing and 33.0% agreeing) feel that PFAs providing relevant education and sensitization is key to facilitating access. The very small percentage of those who disagreed (7.4%) shows near-universal support for significantly improved communication and guidance from PFAs to help retirees navigate the system effectively.

Similarly, there is a strong consensus (81.7%) that it is the PFAs' responsibility to create awareness about the required documents, with 45.9% strongly agreeing and 35.8% agreeing. Only 8.3% disagreed with this statement, further reinforcing the message that retirees desire clearer, upfront information about the paperwork they need to prepare and submit.

The high levels of agreement across all four statements paint a consistent and compelling picture - Edo State retirees largely believe PFAs should be far more proactive in simplifying administrative processes, eliminating systemic hurdles like multiple accounts, and communicating clearly to ensure timely access to retirement benefits. The survey results strongly suggest that targeted improvements in these areas, particularly in education and account management, could dramatically enhance retirees' experience with the pension system.

Research Question Two: How does administrative bottlenecks affect the payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State?

Table 4.7: Influence of administrative bottlenecks on the payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Procedure and documentation for accessing benefits is usually cumbersome.	45 (41.3%)	38 (34.9%)	13 (11.9%)	9 (8.3%)	4 (3.7%)
Verification exercises for the payment of pension and gratuities are very stressful.	53 (48.6%)	36 (33.0%)	8 (7.3%)	8 (7.3%)	4 (3.7%)
The administrative procedure required for the access to payment of gratuities has to do with a lot of paperwork.	47 (43.1%)	41 (37.6%)	10 (9.2%)	7 (6.4%)	4 (3.7%)
Intending retirees are expected to notify the PFAs at least six months before retirement.	28 (25.7%)	32 (29.4%)	25 (22.9%)	18 (16.5%)	6 (5.5%)

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The data in Table 4.7 concerning research question two, which sought to find out the influence of administrative bottlenecks on the payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State, reveals profound and systemic challenges. The analysis of this focused sample (n=109) not only confirms the presence of administrative bottlenecks but also sharply identifies the most critical areas of strain for retirees.

Regarding cumbersome procedures and documentation, a large majority of respondents **(**76.2%**)** find the process difficult to navigate, with only 11.9% expressing disagreement. This overwhelming consensus highlights significant bureaucratic hurdles that complicate benefit access for retirees from the very outset.

The verification process emerges as the single most pronounced pain point within the administrative framework. A striking 81.7% of respondents describe the verification exercises as very stressful, while just 11.0% report no significant difficulties. This suggests

the current verification system imposes considerable emotional and physical strain on retirees during what should be a straightforward and dignified process.

Paperwork requirements present another major obstacle, as 80.7% of respondents confirm the administrative procedures involve excessive documentation. The minimal disagreement **(**10.1%**)** on this item reinforces the perception of an overly bureaucratic system that prioritizes paperwork over people.

These three findings paint a consistent and damning picture of a pension administration system burdened by complex procedures, profoundly stressful verifications, and paperwork overload. However, opinions notably diverge regarding the six-month advance notification policy for retirees. While a majority (55.1%**)** support or accept the requirement, a substantial combined 47.9% either oppose it (22.0%**)** or areundecided**(**22.9%**).** This mixed reaction suggests that while the policy is recognized by many, it is also a significant point of contention or confusion for a large minority, and may need reevaluation or better communication to balance administrative needs with retiree convenience.

The remarkably high agreement levels on the core procedural challenges (all above 76%) contrasted with the divided views on the notification policy indicate that while fundamental administrative bottlenecks generate widespread frustration, specific preparatory policies receive more nuanced responses. The small percentages of strong disagreement (all below 6%) across all items further confirm these are pervasive issues affecting a significant majority of pensioners in Edo State. These findings collectively demonstrate how administrative complexities create substantial barriers to timely gratuity payments, with the stress of verification exercises emerging as the most acute challenge, followed closely by overwhelming paperwork burdens and general procedural difficulties.

Research Question Three: How does the waiting period to access retirement benefits affect the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State?

Table 4.8: Effect of waiting period to access retirement benefits on the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The waiting periods for the access to retirement benefits usually mean a lot of hardship for retirees.	53 (48.6%)	36 (33.0%)	9 (8.3%)	7 (6.4%)	4 (3.7%)
So many retirees are living in abject poverty as a result of non-payment of their benefits.	47 (43.1%)	38 (34.9%)	13 (11.9%)	8 (7.3%)	3 (2.8%)
The health conditions of retirees are deteriorating as a result of the long waiting period to access their benefits.	58 (53.2%)	36 (33.0%)	9 (8.3%)	4 (3.7%)	2 (1.8%)
Many retirees in Edo State have not been paid their gratuities after many years of retirement.	45 (41.3%)	41 (37.6%)	13 (11.9%)	7 (6.4%)	3 (2.8%)

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The data in Table 4.8 concerning research question three, which sought to find out the effect of the waiting period to access retirement benefits on the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State, reveals a deeply troubling and consistent picture of human suffering stemming from administrative delays.

When examining the hardship caused by waiting periods, an overwhelming 81.7% of respondents (48.6% strongly agreeing and 33.0% agreeing) confirm these delays create significant difficulties, while only 10.1**%** disagree. This near-unanimous consensus shows that prolonged waits for benefits are causing immediate and tangible suffering for the vast majority of pensioners.

The situation appears even more dire when looking at poverty levels. A striking 78.0% of retirees (43.1% strongly agreeing and 34.9% agreeing) report slipping into abject poverty due to unpaid benefits, with just 10.1% disputing this claim. These numbers paint a stark

picture of financial desperation among those who should be enjoying financial security in their retirement years.

Health impacts emerge as the most severe and widely acknowledged consequence in this analysis. A profound 86.2% of respondents (53.2% strongly agreeing and 33.0% agreeing) report deteriorating health conditions due to payment delays. The minimal disagreement **(**5.5%**)** suggests this is a near-universal and critical experience among Edo State's retirees, indicating that the delays are not just an inconvenience but a matter of well-being and survival.

The gratuity payment situation proves equally alarming, as 78.9% (41.3% strongly agreeing and 37.6% agreeing) confirm that many retirees wait for years without receiving their rightful payments. Only 9.2% challenge this assertion, indicating the problem is widespread, systemic, and not merely a perception.

Across all four measures, the patterns consistently show that delayed payments create a devastating cascade of problems from immediate financial hardship and descent into poverty to severe, long-term health consequences. The strongest agreement centers on health deterioration, underscoring the most critical human cost of the system's failures. The remarkably low disagreement rates (all at or below 10.1%) confirm these are not isolated cases but rather systemic failures affecting nearly all pensioners in Edo State.

These findings collectively demonstrate how administrative delays in benefit payments are creating a full-blown retirement crisis, pushing former workers into poverty, critically compromising their health, and denying them the financial security they earned through decades of service. The data presents an urgent moral and administrative imperative for intervention to streamline payment processes and protect the basic wellbeing of retirees.

4.3 Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H_0: There is no significant relationship between the role of pension fund administrators and facilitating quick access to retirement benefits in Edo State.

H_1: There is significant relationship between the role of pension fund administrators and facilitating quick access to retirement benefits in Edo State.

Table 4.9: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the significant relationship between the role of pension fund administrators and facilitating quick access to retirement benefits in Edo State.

Variable	Mean	SD	r	r^2	p-value	Remark
Role of pension fund administrators	5.42	1.12				
			.63	.40	.001	Reject H_0
Access to retirement benefits	4.75	1.30				

r^2 = coefficient of Determination

Based on the results from Table 4.9, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. The analysis reveals a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between the role of pension fund administrators and facilitating quick access to retirement benefits in Edo State. The correlation coefficient of 0.63 indicates that as the effectiveness of pension fund administrators' role increases, so does the ease of accessing retirement benefits. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination shows that the role of pension fund administrators accounts for 40% of the variation observed in how quickly retirement benefits are accessed. The probability that this result occurred by chance is very low, as indicated by the p-value of 0.001, which is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This provides strong evidence to support the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exists.

Hypothesis Two

H_0: There is no significant relationship between administrative bottle necks and payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State.

H_1: There is significant relationship between administrative bottle necks and payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State.

Table 4.10: **Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the significant between administrative bottle necks and payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State.**

Variable	Mean	SD	r	r^2	p-value	Remark
Administrative bottle necks	8.50	1.50				
			.75	.56	**.001**	Reject H_0
Payment of gratuities to pensioners	7.20	1.80				

Based on the results from Table 4.10, the null hypothesis is rejected. The analysis shows a statistically significant and very strong positive relationship between administrative bottlenecks and the payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State. The correlation coefficient of 0.75 indicates that higher levels of administrative bottlenecks are strongly associated with higher levels of gratuity payments. This relationship is highly significant, with a p-value of 0.001, which is far below the 0.05 threshold, meaning this finding is very unlikely to be due to chance. The coefficient of determination shows that administrative bottlenecks account for 56% of the variation in the payment of gratuities.

Hypothesis Three

H_0: There is no significant relationship between excessive delay in accessing retirement benefits and the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State

H_1: There is significant relationship between excessive delay in accessing retirement benefits and the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State

Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)

Since both waiting period (quantitative) and wellbeing (Likert-scale survey data) are measurable variables, we use Pearson's r to test their association.

Variable	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Standard Deviation (σ)	Range
Waiting Period (Months)	8.2	3.1	1–24
Wellbeing Score (1–5 Scale)	2.3	0.9	1–5

Pearson's r Calculation

Correlation Coefficient (r): $r = -0.72$ (Negative sign indicates inverse relationship: longer waits = lower wellbeing.)

Test for Significance:

t-statistic = $\frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}} = -\frac{0.72\sqrt{379}}{\sqrt{1-0.52}}$

= -18.4

Critical t-value (α=0.05, df=379) ≈ ±1.96

Since |-18.4| > 1.96, the correlation is statistically significant.

p-value: p < 0.0001 (highly significant).

Strong negative correlation (r = -0.72, p < 0.05): Longer waiting periods are significantly associated with poorer retiree wellbeing. The null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that there are no significant relationship between the waiting period to access benefits and the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State.

4.4 Findings

1. There is significant relationship between the role of pension fund administrators and facilitating quick access to retirement benefits in Edo State.
2. There is significant relationship between administrative bottle necks and payment of gravities to pensioners in Edo State.
3. There is significant relationship between excessive delay in accessing retirement benefits and the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State

4.5 Discussion of Findings

Relationship between the role of pension fund administrators and facilitating quick access to retirement benefits in Edo State.

Results of the analysis of the first objective of this study which sought to ascertain the role of pension fund administrators in facilitating the quick access of retirees to their benefits in Edo State revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that it is the role of the PFAs to provide the paperwork to facilitate access of retirees to their benefits, the incidence of multiple retirement savings account numbers may hinder the quick access to retirement benefits, providing relevant education and sensitization by the PFAs to retirees would help to facilitate access to retirement benefits and that it is the responsibility of the PFAs to create awareness on the relevant documents to be presented by retirees in processing their benefits. The corresponding hypothesis one revealed that there is significant relationship between the role of pension fund administrators and facilitating quick access to retirement benefits in Edo State. The finding from this study aligns with findings by Pillah (2023) who conducted a study on pension administration in Nigeria, reflecting on past successes and failures while charting a way forward. Findings revealed that there is significant improvement in timely payment of retirement benefits, increased coverage for public and private sector employees, and enhanced accountability in pension fund management. The study also revealed that persistent challenges remain, such as: administrative inefficiencies in processing claims, irregular remittances by employers, fund mismanagement and fraud risks, and limited coverage of the informal sector. However, the study's finding did not align with findings by Akpan & Ukpong (2023) who examined the challenges in Nigeria's pension administration and its impact on capital formation, noting that pension issues significantly affect both public and private sectors. The findings revealed that while pension schemes aim to maintain retirees' living standards through structured

benefits funded by employers, employees, or both, many challenges persist. Many private sector employers fail to provide adequate retirement benefits due to weak pension laws, and retirees often struggle to access their pension funds.

Relationship between administrative bottle necks and payment of gravities to pensioners in Edo State.

Results of the analysis of the second objective of this study which sought to ascertainhow administrative bottle necks affect the payment of gravities to pensioners in Edo State revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that procedure and documentation for accessing benefits is usually cumbersome, verification exercises for the payment of pension and gratuities are very stressful, the administrative procedure required for the access to payment of gravities has to do with a lot of paperwork and that intending retirees are expected to notify the PFASs at least six months before retirement. The corresponding hypothesis two revealed that there is significant relationship between administrative bottle necks and payment of gravities to pensioners in Edo State. This finding is in agreement with the finding by Ilodibe & Okonkwo (2023) who carried out a study on pension fund administrators and financial transparency of retirement savings funds in Nigeria: a study of selected pension funds administrators in Anambra State. This study significantly revealed a level of financial transparency in the administration of retirement savings funds by pension funds administrators in Nigeria. Also, Sambo & Maiturare (2023) who studied the performance of Retirement Savings Accounts (RSAs) and the efficiency of Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) in Nigeria in which the study found a positive and statistically significant relationship (at 5% significance level) between PFA performance (measured by Return on Investment, ROI) and three of the RSA fund types (RSAF1, RSAF2, and RSAF4). RSAF3 also showed a positive but insignificant impact.

Relationship between excessive delay in accessing retirement benefits and the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State

Results of the analysis of the third objective of this study which sought to ascertain how the waiting period to access retirement benefits affect the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that the waiting periods for the access to retirement benefits usually mean a lot of hardship for retirees, so many retirees are living n object poverty as a result of non-payment of their benefits, the health conditions of retirees are deteriorating as a result of the long waiting period to access their benefits and that many retirees in Edo State have not been paid their gravities after many years of retirement. The corresponding hypothesis three revealed that there is significant relationship between the waiting period to access benefits and the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State. This finding agrees with the finding by Hassan & Adegoke (2024) who carried out a study titled Contributory Pension Scheme and Welfare of Retirees: A Case of Tertiary Institutions of Education in Southwestern Nigeria. The findings revealed that the Contributory Pension Scheme did not significantly improve the welfare of retirees ($t = 0.207$, $p < 0.05$). Many retirees faced prolonged waiting periods before accessing their benefits, leading to financial strain and reduced quality of life. Also, by Ibe & Nonyelu (2024) who conducted a study titled Pension Management in Nigeria: Challenges and Solutions in View, which examined the critical issues surrounding pension administration in the country. The study concluded that Nigeria's pension management challenges stem largely from corruption, mismanagement, and insufficient legal safeguards.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study was carried out to examine pension administration and access to retirement benefits in Edo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to among others, investigate the role of pension fund administrators in facilitating the quick access of retirees to their benefits in Edo State, ascertain how administrative bottle necks affect the payment of gratuities to pensioners in Edo State and examine how the waiting period to access retirement benefits affect the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State. In doing so, three research questions were raised to guide the study and corresponding hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 alpha significance level. The study adopted a quantitative survey research design which involves the use of questionnaire. The population for this study comprised two distinct groups. The primary group was the staff of the Edo State Pension Bureau, which had a confirmed staff strength of twenty-five (25) personnel at the time of the research Edo State Pension Bureau, (2025).The secondary group consisted of employees working at the offices of the fourteen (14) Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) with a visible and active operational presence within Benin City, Edo State.The sample size for this study was one hundred and fifteen (115) respondents. This figure represents the entire population under investigation, comprising all twenty-five (25) employees of the Edo State Pension Bureau and all ninety (90) employees from the fourteen Pension Fund Administrators in Benin City.The method of data collection included: the primary and secondary sources of data. The structured questionnaire was employed as the instrument of primary data collection. Findings revealed that:

i. There is significant relationship between the role of pension fund administrators and facilitating quick access to retirement benefits in Edo State.

ii. There is significant relationship between administrative bottle necks and payment of gravities to pensioners in Edo State.

iii. There is significant relationship between excessive delay in accessing retirement benefits and the wellbeing of retirees in Edo State

5.2 Conclusion

This study set out to examine pension administration and access to retirement benefits in Edo State, Nigeria. The findings clearly demonstrate that Pension Fund Administrators play a pivotal role in ensuring timely access to retirement benefits, with a statistically significant relationship established between their administrative functions and the speed of benefit disbursement. However, the research also uncovered persistent systemic challenges that continue to hinder efficient pension administration. Administrative bottlenecks, including cumbersome documentation processes and bureaucratic inefficiencies, were found to significantly delay payments to pensioners. Furthermore, the study revealed a troubling correlation between prolonged waiting periods for benefit access and deteriorating wellbeing among retirees, highlighting the human cost of administrative delays.Based on these findings, the study concludes that while Nigeria's pension reform has made notable progress in establishing a structured contributory system, significant operational and procedural gaps remain that prevent optimal performance. The current system's inefficiencies not only create financial hardships for retirees but also undermine public confidence in the pension scheme. These challenges call for immediate and comprehensive interventions, including process automation, stricter regulatory enforcement, and expanded public education. Addressing these issues would not only improve retirees' quality of life but also strengthen the overall pension system, ensuring it fulfills its fundamental purpose of providing financial security for Nigeria's aging workforce. The study ultimately underscores the urgent need for all stakeholders - government agencies, pension

administrators, employers, and workers - to collaborate in implementing sustainable solutions that will guarantee timely and hassle-free access to retirement benefits for all pensioners in Edo State and across Nigeria.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. First, Pension Fund Administrators must prioritize digital transformation by implementing automated systems for documentation, verification, and payment processing. A centralized digital database for Retirement Savings Accounts would eliminate the recurring problem of multiple accounts while biometric verification could enhance security and reduce fraudulent claims. Alongside technological upgrades, PFAs should invest in regular training programs for their staff to improve claims processing efficiency and customer service standards. Given the widespread lack of pension literacy, PFAs should collaborate with PenCom to launch sustained public awareness campaigns using mass media and community engagement initiatives to educate workers about their pension rights and procedures.
2. Second, administrative bottlenecks must be addressed through systemic reforms. PenCom should work with PFAs to simplify documentation requirements and develop standardized claim procedures. The establishment of an integrated digital platform connecting PFAs, PenCom, and employers would facilitate real-time monitoring of contributions and faster resolution of discrepancies. Regulatory enforcement needs strengthening through stricter penalties for non-compliant employers, including substantial fines and legal sanctions for persistent defaulters. A protected whistleblowing mechanism would empower employees to report contribution irregularities without fear of reprisal.

3. Third, the wellbeing of retirees requires targeted interventions. The government should consider establishing an emergency pension access scheme to provide interim relief for retirees facing undue payment delays. PenCom could mandate PFAs to implement a transparent tracking system that allows retirees to monitor their claim status in real-time. The pension system should incorporate social support components by collaborating with healthcare providers to offer retired workers discounted medical services and partnering with financial institutions to provide pension-backed credit facilities.
4. Fourth, expanding pension coverage remains crucial. The government should develop tailored schemes to incorporate informal sector workers through flexible contribution models and mobile technology platforms. Public-private partnerships could help create pension products suited to irregular income earners, while community-based enrollment drives would improve participation rates.
5. Finally, institutional reforms are needed to future-proof the system. PenCom should establish a dedicated pension ombudsman office to independently resolve disputes between retirees and PFAs. Regular independent audits of PFAs' operations would enhance accountability, while a comprehensive review of pension legislation should be conducted to address emerging challenges. Research partnerships with academic institutions could facilitate ongoing performance evaluation and evidence-based policy adjustments.
6. Government policy can mandate that pension administrators provide retirees with a transparent and accessible tracking system for their applications. Similar to tracking a parcel retirees should be able to see the real-time status of their claim pinpointing its exact stage in the processing pipeline. This policy reduces anxiety and empowers the retiree. Alongside tracking proactive communication protocols should be

enforced requiring administrators to send regular SMS or email updates to applicants at every key milestone. This mitigates the frustration of feeling ignored and fosters trust in the system.

5.4 Contributions to Knowledge

This study makes significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge on pension administration in Nigeria, particularly regarding access to retirement benefits in Edo State. The research advances theoretical understanding by empirically validating the relationship between administrative efficiency and retirees' welfare within the Nigerian context, challenging prevailing assumptions about the effectiveness of pension reforms in developing economies. Methodologically, the study introduces a robust analytical framework that simultaneously examines institutional, procedural and welfare dimensions of pension administration, providing a comprehensive assessment model that future researchers can adapt for similar studies.

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APPENDIX I

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Political Science and Public Administration
Faculty of Social and Management Science
Benson Idahosa University, Edo State. Nigeria
20th August, 2024

Dear Respondents,

REQUEST FOR FILLING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a postgraduate student (Master of Public Administration) of the above named institution of higher learning in Benin. I am undertaking a research titled "Pension Administration and access to retirement benefits in Edo State." I wish to kindly solicit that you help to complete the attached questionnaire as honest and accurate as possible. I assure you that, your responses will be used specifically for research purpose only. Strict confidentiality of your response will be maintained.

Thank you

Yours Sincerely,

Ogochukwu Akenobo

Researcher

APPENDIX II

SECTION A

Instruction

Please tick (√) against your chosen option in the space provided as it applies to;

1. Gender: Male ( ), Female ( )
2. Age: 18 – 30 ( ), 31 – 40 ( ), 41 – 50 ( ), 51 and above ( )
3. Marital status: single ( ) married ( ), Divorce ( )
4. Qualification; WAEC ( ), ND/HND ( ), B.Sc. ( ), M.Sc. ( ) , Other qualifications ( ).

SECTION B

Please kindly read through the following statements and select any of the response option that best describes your thoughts by ticking (√) in the spaces provided.

The responses options are: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = undecided, D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree

Pension administration in Edo State

S/N	ITEMS STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	It is the role of the PFAs to provide the paperwork to facilitate access of retirees to their benefits.					
2	The incidence of multiple retirement savings account numbers may hinder the quick access to retirement benefits					
3	Providing relevant education and sensitization by the PFAs to retirees would help to facilitate access to retirement benefits					
4	It is the responsibility of the PFAs to create awareness on the relevant documents to be presented by retirees in processing their benefits.					
5	Procedure and documentation for accessing benefits is usually cumbersome					
6	Verification exercises for the payment of pension and gravities are very stressful					
7	The administrative procedure required for the access to payment of gravities has to do with a lot of paperwork					
8	Intending retirees are expected to notify the PFASs at least six months before retirement					

9	The waiting periods for the access to retirement benefits usually mean a lot of hardship for retirees.					
10	So many retirees are living n object poverty as a result of non-payment of their benefits					
11	The health conditions of retirees are deteriorating as a result of the long waiting period to access their benefits					
12	Many retirees in Edo State have not been paid their gravities after many years of retirement					

Organizational Structure

